



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
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November 19, 2007

Dear Colleague,

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) is launching a statewide educational campaign for the general public that will build upon and complement ongoing efforts for both seasonal influenza prevention and pandemic planning in the Commonwealth. The *Flu Facts: What You Need to Know* statewide educational campaign launched in October 2006 was the beginning of a concentrated effort to educate residents about flu and pandemic flu. This year's initiative aims to build on past work to educate the public and introduces information about caring for people with the flu at home.

The initiative is titled *Flu: What You Can Do – Caring for People at Home*. The primary objectives are:

- To increase knowledge regarding the similarities and differences between seasonal and pandemic flu;
- To increase knowledge about how to prevent transmission of influenza in the home and community setting;
- To provide information and tools to care for persons with seasonal and pandemic influenza at home; and
- To decrease surge on the medical system by educating the public about symptoms that indicate when to seek medical advice and when to seek medical care.

There will be a reinforcement of the message that caring for a family member, or someone you live with, during a pandemic will be very similar to what the general public already does during each regular flu season. An end goal is to reduce the potential surge of patients seeking care at hospital emergency rooms and alternative care sites during a pandemic.

The initiative includes two major components:

1. **Statewide Distribution of Educational Materials (booklet and video)**

The enclosed booklets are being distributed to key regional and local partners, including local public health. The booklet is designed to be a resource for people during both seasonal flu and pandemic flu, and emphasizes the steps that individuals can take to be prepared to care for a loved one at home – and when to seek medical advice. A 20-minute video has also been developed; it presents a summary of the key information presented in the booklet and can be played in office waiting rooms, during a health class or educational presentation, etc.

MDPH is looking for your help in distributing this information to the public. Please pass on copies of the booklet to the individuals and families whom you serve, and display the booklet in areas where people will see it. The attached order form enables you to order additional copies as necessary. Spanish and Portuguese translations are in process and will be available early in 2008. If you are interested in obtaining a copy of the educational video, you may order one using the same form. The booklet and additional information related to seasonal and pandemic flu are also available on the MDPH website at www.mass.gov/dph/flu. The video will be posted by the end of November.

2. Implementation of Community Outreach and Education

Public education and community outreach are essential to this campaign. Healthcare professionals along with their public health partners are the backbone of seasonal flu prevention as well as pandemic planning. The goal of this component is to recruit and train a core group of local public health professionals, community health center educators, school nurses, Medical Reserve Corp volunteers and others. These “education team” members will be willing to conduct outreach, organize and implement educational presentations within their organization or in their community specifically to support the statewide *Flu Care at Home* initiative.

To assist with the community education efforts, MDPH and the Local Public Health Training Institute of Massachusetts will be hosting a series of 10 train-the-trainer sessions around the state starting in December 2007. Please attend one of these sessions; you can visit the Institute’s website at www.masslocalinstitute.org for a calendar of sessions and to register.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in educating Massachusetts residents about the flu and flu care at home. We appreciate your support in furthering public health and preparedness in the Commonwealth. If you have questions about the campaign or would like additional support rolling out flu education in your organization or in your community, please contact your MDPH regional health educator (see list below), or call MDPH, Division of Epidemiology and Immunization at (617) 983-6800.

Sincerely,

John Auerbach
Commissioner

Preparedness Region	Regional Health Educator
1 Western MA	Barbara Coughlin, RN Barbara.Coughlin@state.ma.us or (413) 586-7525 x1165
2 Central MA	Position is currently vacant. Please contact Kathleen Gilmore, MEd Kathleen.Gilmore@state.ma.us or (413) 586-7525 x1149 Cell: (617) 839-6919
3 Northeast MA	Elizabeth Land, MS Elizabeth.Land@state.ma.us or (978) 851-7261 x4027
4a Metro West	Judith Chevarley, MPH Judith.Chevarley@state.ma.us or (617) 983-6800
4b Metro Boston	Ashley Barrat, MPH Ashley.Barrat@state.ma.us or (617) 983-6800
4c Boston	Brad Cohen, Director Del Valle Institute for Emergency Preparedness Training Cohen@bostonems.org or (617) 343-1370
5 Southeast MA	Lisa Crowner Lisa.Crowner@state.ma.us or (508) 977-3706

Cities and towns in each region are listed at: www.mass.gov/dph/topic/emergencypreparedness.htm. Click on Emergency Preparedness and Response, then scroll down and click on Regional Information, then click on Maps and Charts.